

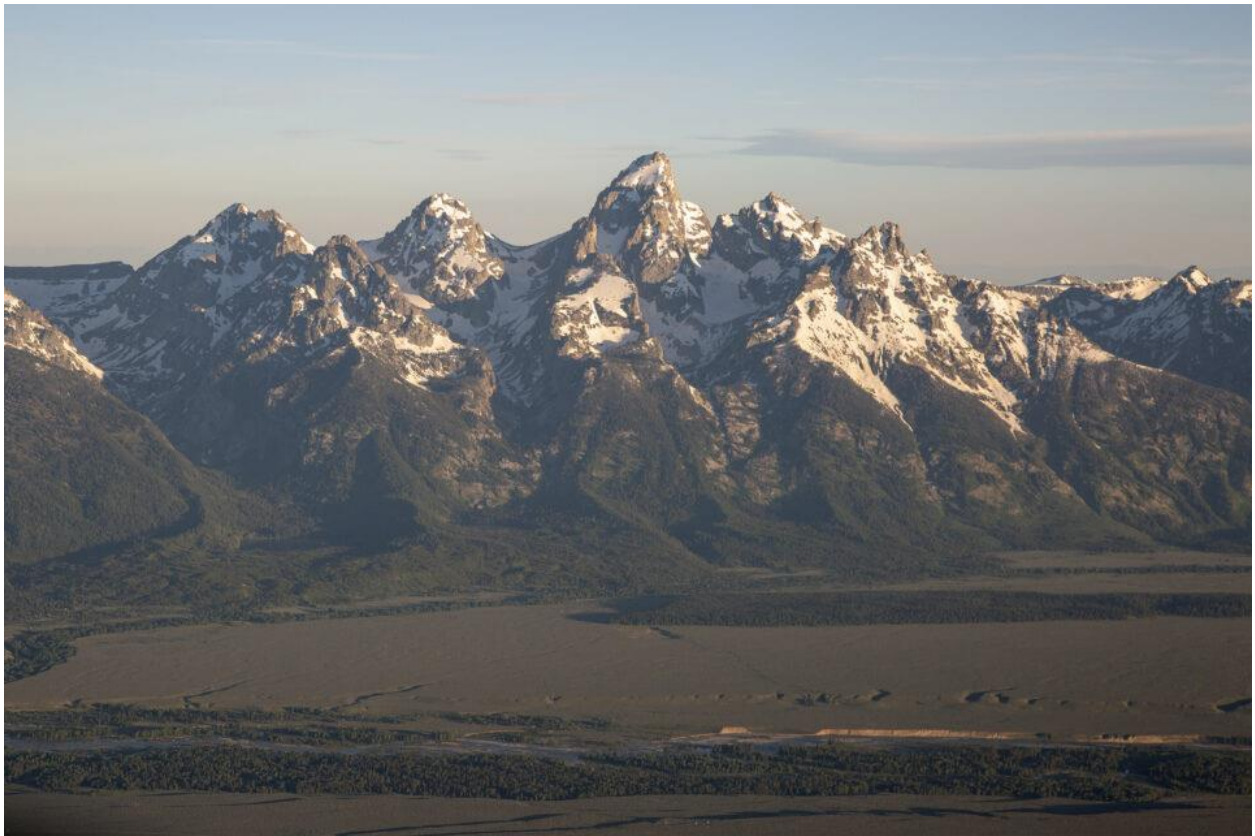
BUCKRAIL

HOUSING

Housing in Jackson: Is this a crisis?



by [Buckrail @ Lindsay](#) June 2, 2021



Mayor Hailey Morton Levinson called the housing situation in Jackson Hole "a long-

simmering crisis. Especially in this last year with COVID, we have seen it just exacerbated more than any of us could imagine." Photo: Nick Sulzer // Buckrail.

JACKSON, Wyo. — Language is a powerful tool, it can be used to validate the experience of individuals or a community at large.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word crisis is defined as, “a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger, a time when a difficult or important decision must be made. A turning point.”

The housing situation in Jackson Hole has shifted dramatically in the past year. Recent data released by the Jackson/Teton County Affordable Housing Department found that while wages rose 4% in 2020, median home prices rose 23-44% locally. Average rents rose 9%.

According to the Department, there are 350 deed-restricted units that are in some phase of the planning process. These units are being built through private partnerships and public-private partnerships.

This year alone, the town of Jackson has issued 62 single-family home building permits, a significant increase compared to the 20 permits issued in 2019-2020.

At the time of publishing, Jackson Hole News & Guide classifieds has 182 jobs posted with just five apartments or rooms listed for rent. Two properties are listed for sale in the classifieds for \$1,295,000 and \$2,395,000.

Buckrail asked Town of Jackson elected officials and Joint Affordable Housing Department Director, April Norton if they describe the current housing landscape as a crisis.

April Norton said, “I don’t take that word lightly but from where I sit, it’s a crisis and for many people, it has been for a while.”

Norton described how the situation has accelerated in the past year and the “backpack of stress people are wearing.” She said, “The ratio of help wanted ads to available rentals is astounding.”

Mayor Hailey Morton Levinson called the situation “a long-simmering crisis; especially in this last year with COVID, we have seen it just exacerbated more than any of us could imagine.”

She said housing in Jackson is something that has always been on her mind but that “it has definitely become more front and center.”

Morton Levinson discussed how the housing crisis is currently unfolding and displacing people presently, while many housing projects are years away from completion. “Local government can’t afford or build houses fast enough to help out the people who need housing but that doesn’t mean we stop trying. We have to find new avenues and partnerships to find some sort of release.”

“Some folks will lean on the idea that it has always been hard to live here and that you have to make sacrifices to make it work. Which is true, but, that is not a solution,” Morton Levinson said.

Vice Mayor Arne Jorgensen called the housing situation a “foundational issue.”

Jorgensen was careful to not call the situation a crisis, “crises have short-term solutions, housing is a long-term issue,” Jorgensen said.

He also said that this was a community question, and discussed how we must learn from other mountain towns, like Aspen.

He said the town can’t wait for the market to fall to begin to look at properties, “Local workers won’t be able to outbid the wealth that is attracted to this community,” Jorgensen said.

Councilmember Jonathan Schechter also weighed in. He said, “If this isn’t a crisis I don’t know what is.”

“We clearly have a severe problem. The question is what are we going to do about it? It doesn’t matter what label we put on it,” Schechter said.

He called the situation “an extraordinary confluence of forces with unlimited demand exceptionally small amount of supply.” It’s going to be very hard to address the crisis if we don’t have the right set of tools to address it,” Schechter said.

In March, Teton County District 23 Representative Andy Schwartz sponsored a bill that would provide counties the opportunity to implement a [real estate transfer tax](#). The tax would impose a 1% tax on real estate sales above one million dollars. The bill failed during a House Revenue Committee meeting, 5-4.

The Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce is holding a “Business Over Breakfast” meeting tomorrow, June 3, to discuss Jackson’s housing market. According to The Chamber, the conversation will “uncover the core issues and work toward genuine solutions.”

Editor’s note: This article is part of a series on recent housing-related issues in Jackson Hole. To read more articles in this series, click [here](#).

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